

## **Place Names With Tay-Origin Elements Being Usded Inconsistently in Tuyen Quang Province, Vietnam**

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**Abstract:** Currently, many place names with original elements that are from ethnic minority languages in Vietnam are read and written in Vietnamese in different ways. The place names with Tay-origin elements in Tuyen Quang province are facing the same situation. The article statistically surveyed on maps of all kinds (collectively referred to as maps), documents on civil status, household registration, administrative documents (collectively referred to as Vietnamese documents) and surveyed the field of place names with Tay-origin elements in Tuyen Quang province (on the basis of 4 districts: Chiem Hoa, Lam Binh, Na Hang and Son Duong) with a view to achieve results about the current situation, find out the causes and give solutions of translating those place names into Vietnamese so that they can be read and written in a consistent and accurate way, according to the Vietnamese model.

**Keywords:** *place names, Tay language, Vietnamese, first consonant, standardization, Tuyen Quang.*

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Date of Submission: 07-03-2020

Date of Acceptance: 21-04-2020

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Studying about toponymy, we have found out that many authors claim that the name of a place is a unique title for each natural or unnatural subject in space. According to Russian Linguistic Encyclopedia Dictionary, the study of place names (toponymy) is part of Onomastics (the study of titles) which studies the geographical names, the administration and the transformation of those names over time [8, p.515].

According to Russian linguist A.V. Superanskaja, place names are words within the lexical resource of a language, denoted by individual words and subdivided into natural and artificial subtypes. They have common names and proper names. According to the author, a place, whether large or small, has a name which includes two parts: common name and proper name [5, p.13]. In linguistics, Toponymy is a lexical subject that studies names and how geographic nouns such as names of rivers, mountains or country names and other places are formed [7, p.978].

Inherit those results, we believe that: Place names include a common element, which is a part of a common name and a separate element, which is a part of a proper name.

Studying place names in the orientation of studying linguistic toponymy, geographic toponymy and historical toponymy is highly appreciated by Western authors. There are numerous outstanding studies conducted by authors such as T.A. Gibson; Issac Taylor, Charles Rostaing, etc. Studies of Russian toponymists have marked a new milestone for the study of place names. E.M. Murzaev, A. Kapenko, A.I. Popov and, especially, A.V. Superanskaja have set and solved the issues that are both specific and general related to the study of place names. Through their works, we have found that foreign place names are generally studied in geographic theory such as concept, classification, analysis of place names and the relationship between toponymy and other social sciences. This is undoubtedly an important theoretical basis for research in this field in Vietnam.

In Vietnam, studying places in the orientation of geographical-historical-cultural approach has been employed by authors Nguyen Van Au, Bui Thiet, Nguyen Duoc, Trung Hai, Nguyen Nhu Y, etc. The authors systematize place names or study place names with categories associated with specific geographic regions. Studying place names in the orientation of linguistics has been employed by authors Le Trung Hoa, Nguyen Kien Truong, Tu Thu Mai, Phan Xuan Dam, etc. The authors explore the geographical structure, the way of identification, and study the place names according to the cultural and historical characteristics of the places in different regions of Vietnam. These works mainly focus on places with Vietnamese names. There are a number of works about place names related to ethnic minorities such as Place names of Cham in Central Vietnam (2002); Khơ Me place names (2003) by Le Trung Hoa; A study on the place names with the original language elements of ethnic minorities in Western Thua Thien Hue by Tran Van Sang. However, there are rarely any studies of place names with ethnic minority origins in the northeastern mountainous areas of Vietnam. There has not been any work about place names with original elements of Tay language in Tuyen Quang province yet.

TuyenQuang is a mountainous province in the Northeast region of Vietnam. Tay people, one of the original inhabitants, have settled in TuyenQuang for a long time. The language of Tay ethnic group in TuyenQuang, Tay - Thai language group, belongs to Tai - Ka Dai language family. The place names with Tay-origin elements in Tuyen Quang province are facing the same situation. Place names with ethnic minority original elements in Tuyen Quang province are names (of land, of mountains, of rivers, etc.) which have original elements of ethnic minority language and are accepted by native speakers and used by non-native speakers. They are real words with meanings that are recognized by people of ethnic minority.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province

Based on surveyed materials: Topographic map of TuyenQuang province in 2009 (1); List of places of residence, mountains, rivers, socio-economy of TuyenQuang province in 2014 (2); Administrative map of TuyenQuang province in 2014 (3); Administrative maps of districts: ChiemHoa, Lam Binh, Na Hang, Son Duong in 2014 (4), surveyed the field of place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province (5), we obtained the results: Through the research on 1176 place names originated in ethnic minority languages in TuyenQuang province, has documented 382 cases of inconsistent names (32.48%). There are 72 cases in which of place names are not unified in the way of recording the first consonant (occupying 18.85% of place names used inconsistently) [3]. Below we lead some examples.

- Case 1: Do not unify the “b”.

For example:

Common element	1	2	3	4	5
village	Pac Ta	Pac Ba			Pác Ba
stream	MoNgoang	BoNgoang	Mo Ngoang	Mo Ngoang	BoNgoang, Mo Ngoang
village	Bac Pen	Pap Pen			Pac Pen, Bac Pen
stream	KhuoiBuoc	KhuoiLuoc		KhuoiLuoc	KhuoiLuoc

- Case 2: Do not unify the “p” and “ph”.

For example:

Common element	1	2	3	4	5
village	Phuoc	Puoc		Puoc	Phuoc/Puoc
village		NaPhin	Na Pin	Na Pin	NaPhin,Na Pin
village	Phia Chang		Phja Chang		PhjaTrang, Phea Chang
mountain	Pia Bo Can	Phia Bo Can		Pia Bo Can	Pia Bo Can
mountain	PiaĐeng	PhiaĐeng		PiaĐeng	PiaĐeng
mountain	Keo Pay	KéoPhay		Keo Pay	Keo Pay
village	Pai Net	PhaiLec			PhaiLec

- Case 3: Do not unify the “o” and “oo”.

For example:

Common element	1	2	3	4	5
Mountain	PiaBoc	PhiaBiooc	PiaBioc	PiaBoc	PjaBooc, PhiaBooc, PiaBoc
village	NaChoong	Na Chong			NaChoong
village	Coc	NaCooc	NaCooc	NaCooc	Na Coc, NaCooc
stream	Phong Ma	Phoong Ma			Phoong Ma
village	Cuong	NoongCuong	NoongCuong	NoongCuong	Lang Cuong, NoongCuong
village	MongTuong	NoongTuong	NoongTuong	NoongTuong	NoongTuong, MongTuong
village	Na Poong	Na Pong	Na Pong	Na Pong	Na Pong, No Pong

village	Tong Moc	Tong Mooc		Tong Mooc	Tong Mooc
village	Na Coc	Na Coong		Na Cooc	Na Coc, Na Cooc
mountain	Phia Phuong	Phia Pioong		Phia Phuong	Phia Phuong
stream	Soc	Sooc		Soc	Sooc, Soc

- Case 4: Do not unify the final sounds

For example:

Common element	1	2	3	4	5
mountain	Khao Mo	Khau Mo		Khao Mo	Khao Mo, Khau Mo
village	Tang Khiet	Tang Khiec		Tang Khiec	Tang Khiec
village			Khau Pau	Khau Phau	Khau Phau
cascade					Pac Hau, Pac Haur
cave					Tham Lau, Tham Laur

"Place names are words, like any other words, subject to the effect of phonetic law" [2; 109]. Of all impacts, local phonetics are one of the important causes of changes in reading place names. At the same time, Kinh people living with Tay people face many difficulties when pronouncing places like the locals. Therefore, many place names, which sound like Tay, are borrowed from Kinh. When the Tay has written language, they write places according to their pronunciation. Kinh people have their own different ways of writing and reading according to their language. This makes each group of people write place names in a different way. Consequently, a same place has many different ways to call. Local phonetics is one of the most important reasons for inconsistent spelling.

The difference in phonetic of Tay language compared to Vietnamese :

In Tay language, there are palatalized consonants /bj/, /mj/, /pj/, /phj/.

In Tay language, there is an opposition of fricative labiodental consonant /f/ with bilabial consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/. There is no bilabial consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/ in Vietnamese.

In Tay language, there is a side fricative consonant /l/. There is nothing like that in Vietnamese.

Vietnamese has fricative consonants /x/, /y/. In Tay language, there is a plosive sound /k<sup>h</sup>/. The above differences are in the first consonants.

For vowels sounds: In the Tay language due to the short vowel /o / opposite of the long vowel /3/. There is nothing like that in Vietnamese.

The difference in scripting of Tay language compared to Vietnamese:

+ About the character of the consonant sound:

In the Tay language, the letter "ph" is used to record the lip-consonant consonant / lip /ph/. Meanwhile, Vietnamese uses "ph" to record the /f/ consonant.

In the Tay language, there are characters to surprise the syllable /bj /, /mj /, /pj/, / phj/ like with the letter "i". In Vietnamese, there are no surprised phonemes and characters to record these sounds.

In the Tay language, the character "sl" is used to record the consonant /l/. In Vietnamese no.

+ About vowel recording characters:

In the Tay language, long vowels are written in two connected letters (for example, "oo").

+ About tones: There is no self in Tay language, therefore, it is not necessary to use tilde in writing.

The difference in phonetic and scripting of Tay language compared to Vietnamese is one of the reasons that make place names with Tay-origin elements in Tuyen Quang province being used inconsistently, which results in different ways of reading and writing the name of a place; hence, there is a need to standardize all the names of places.

## 2.2. The matter of standardizing ways of writing and reading place names

Standardizing a place name means unifying the way of reading and writing the name of a place based on certain principles. Standardizing place names leads to a uniform use of names in a territory or a country, and, to a greater extent, to avoid confusion of place names and "to prevent international political disputes" [ 1, p.9].

The United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) sets out a general principle of standardizing place names: "use Latin characters and Latin symbols and in any case, must not violate beliefs and sentiments" [1, p.2]. In *Resolution No.4* of the United Nations Conference on the standardization of place names, five specific proposals were made: international standards for place names, collection of place names, principles of processing place names in bureaus, and handling place names in multilingual areas and catalog national place names. Of the above proposals, the one that should be taken into consideration is the introduction

of principles for writing place names and the requirement "the way of writing place names must best suit to the current spelling rules of the country, while also taking into account the types of geographical language" [1, p.13].

Standardization of place names is specifically regulated with the following principles:

First: Maintaining the original language;

Second: Phonetic transcribing;

Third: Lexical transferring;

Fourth: Translating meaning;

Fifth: Using according to habits;

Sixth: Following the Regulations of the State or National Place Names Committee. [1, p.2].

These are considered to be the basic principles for a general process of translating place names.

In Vietnam, according to the researchers' results, there are a quite great number of place names that are used inconsistently in way of writing and using geographical terms [1, p.3].

The standardization of place names of ethnic minorities in Vietnam is a very complicated issue. It is "a move to correctly writing that proper name in Vietnamese documents, based on that ethnic minority script (if any), or based on the specific name of that ethnic group (if no word is available). write)". [4, p.9]

However, place names with ethnic minority's language elements in different regions have their own characteristics. According to some researchers, the place names of ethnic minorities in the North of Vietnam in Vietnamese documents are mainly Thai, Tay - Nung, Hmong, Muong, and Ha Nhi, etc. They are often from oral languages and are recorded by the national language. The way to write the place names with original elements of ethnic minorities in the North is suggested as follows: "For cases where it is unclear how to write or one of the ways must be chosen, the best way is following how this place name is read by ethnic minorities." [4, p.68] and "follow the rules of transcribing common Vietnamese places: write each word separately, capitalize the first letters of the word, do not include dash (...), and do not use separate symbols". [4, p.69].

### 2.3. Standardizing place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province without unified

#### 2.3.1. Principles of transcribing Tay-origin place names

Standardizing the writing of Tay's place names must be in line with the Party's and State's status, circumstance and language policy on ethnic minority languages. In order to transcribe the ethnic minority place names into Vietnamese, some principles can be proposed as follows:

- Vietnam is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation but Vietnamese is the national language. Therefore, the place names in ethnic minority languages must be transcribed with Vietnamese symbols into Vietnamese.

- In comparison between Tay and Vietnamese, in terms of phonetics and characters, there are many similarities, thus creating favorable conditions for the transcription of the Tay-origin place names into Vietnamese. At the same time, the specific characteristics of the Tay language should be considered and the pronunciation of native speakers should be respected.

- When standardizing the Tay's place names into Vietnamese, it is necessary to avoid disturbances, especially those that have been recorded for a long time on national maps and maps that have existed for a long time.

These are the principles applied to the whole process of proposing the transcribing method in order for a consistent way to write down the names which need to be standardized in TuyenQuang province.

#### 2.3.2. A specific solution for writing the first consonant

Use single characters or combinations of characters to write consonants with pronunciation close to the Tay and Nung languages.

+ Case 1. The palatalized consonants are written by adding "i" before the vowels and after the consonant.

For example:

**Transcription**

/tat2 nΦ(m5 mja3/

/pu3 phja1 doN1/

/pu3 phja1 khau1/

/pu3 phjabj□□k2/

/ban4 Pjat2/

/pu3 Phja1 Pjoong1/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**

tátNậmMia

pùphiaĐông

pùPhiaKhao

pùPhiaBioóc

bản Pi Át

pùphiapioong...

+ Case 2. Fricative labiodental consonant /f/ and plosive bilabial consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/ are differently written. The consonant /f/ is written as "f" and the consonant /p<sup>h</sup>/ is written as "ph".

For example:

**Transcription**

/ban4 pak2 fa1/

/ban4 na3 fek2/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**

bảnPácPha

bảnNàPhéc

/təom1 fa5/  
/khuoi4 fe1 Cau04/

ThômPhạ  
khuôiPheChâu...

+ Case 3. For the sounds written as "sl" in Tay language, the symbol /l/ is used to represent them when transcribed.

For example:

**Transcription**  
/tat2 khuoi4 tuN2/  
/pu3 kok2 loN1/  
/ban4 lau1/  
/pu3 khau1 laN4/  
/khuoi45 lăN1 măm2/  
/khuoi4 l□□k2/  
/ban4 na3 lam4/  
/khuoi4 bak2 lat2/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**  
tátKhuôiSlùng  
pùCốcSlông  
bảnSlao  
pùKhauslăng  
khuôiSlănMăm  
khuôiSlóóc  
bảnNàSlám  
khuôiBácSlát...

*Writing vowel sounds:* there is difference in writing vowel sounds in place names. In the standardization of place names, it is necessary to use the letters or combination of letters in Vietnamese script to write the corresponding vowels or vowels with a close reading of the original names.

**Transcription**

/pu3 na3 l□□N2/  
/pu3 khau1 k□□N2/  
/pu3 l□□N1 n□□N3/  
/pu3 h□□N1 khau05/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**

pùNàLoóng  
pùKhaucóóng  
pùLoongNoòng  
pùHoongKhạo

*Writing final sounds:* the final sound “r” in Tay language needs to be replaced by “u”.

**Transcription**

/pu3 na3 l□□N2/  
/pu3 khau1 k□□N2/  
/pu3 l□□N1 n□□N3/  
/pu3 h□□N1 khau05/

**Proposed written words (in Vietnamese)**

pùNàLoóng  
pùKhaucóóng  
pùLoongNoòng  
pùHoongKhạo

**III. CONCLUSION**

That there are inconsistent ways of place names occurs due to the phonetic and scripting differences between Tay language and Vietnamese. When Vietnamese becomes the national language, the writing of place names with Tay-origin elements according to Vietnamese and officially documenting them in Vietnamese facilitate communication. After many times of standardization, many place names have been changed. However, there are certain differences between Vietnamese and Tay language. In some cases, Vietnamese cannot be used to reflect the sound reflect the sound, and it is difficult to transcribe the pronunciation of Tay people, so some place names with Tay-origin elements have been popularized for easier reading in Vietnamese. Therefore, there is a certain deviation in pronouncing the place names. The solution to standardize the way of writing place names with Tay-origin elements in TuyenQuang province is to use Vietnamese script, characters and writing rules to transcribe Tay-origin place names into Vietnamese - the national language. In addition, other characters and spellings in Vietnamese can be used to write Tay-origin place names.

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Dr DuongThiNgu. "Place Names With Tay-Origin Elements Being Usded Inconsistentlyin Tuyen Quang Province, Vietnam." *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 25(4), 2020, pp. 12-17.